Education

Perhaps the greatest achievement of the Society of Lithuanian Catholic Women was in the field of education. In all the meetings and conferences of the Society, questions connected with education were considered of first importance and many reports were submitted on educational matters. From 1919 the Society began publishing another magazine "Moteris" (The Woman) which soon had over 25,000 subscribers. Besides periodicals, the society published books on topics of interest to women, namely: the rearing of children, domestic economy, health, etc. The Society maintained four schools of domestic science and agriculture for girls, many libraries, reading-rooms, hostels for students, and kindergartens. It also established scholarships for needy students.

Sections of the Society.

In 1928 the Society celebrated its twentieth anniversary. In that connection it convened a congress in which 3,170 representatives took part. The congress voted to organize the following sections: Aid for Girls; Mother and Child; Homemakers. With the creation of these sections the Society greatly expanded its activities.

Girls' Aid Section

This Section maintained two work centers, where girls could learn domestic economy and various trades; two employment offices; a home where girl travellers could spend the night; missions in the railway stations of the larger cities where girls could obtain needed aid. About 10,000 girls used the shelter centers and about 2,640 studied at the work centers annually.

Mother and Child Section

The aim of this Section was to safeguard the health of mothers and children. For this purpose the Society established nine health centers where mothers could get needed advice. The centers were kept up by Councils of Mothers elected by the local branches of the Society. Each health center had the services of a physician, a registered nurse and a midwife. In order to teach the mothers, this Section acquired a movable "Mother and Child Exhibit" and a projection machine to be used

to illustrate lectures given at the health centers. In Kaunas the Section maintained a home with a creche attached, for mothers who were poor and alone.

Homemakers' Section

The Section was devoted to the improvement of the condition of farm women. It gave courses in domestic economy, established prizes for various competitions, organized excursions to model farms, helped farm women to obtain different goods at reduced rates, arranged "Homemakers' Days", and so on.

Despite the Society's high purpose, its way was not easy. At its inception, Lithuania was still under the oppressive rule of Tsarist Russia, which repressed every national effort that was at all outstanding. During World War I, in 1915-1918, the Society suffered under a series of repressive measures from the German government of occupation. Only after Lithuania regained its independence did the Society really begin to flourish. By 1939 the Society had 55,000 members. It built a fine modern building in Kaunas which housed its secretariat and the editorial and administrative offices of the Society's organ "Moteris."

When the Soviet Union occupied Lithuania in 1940, the occupants suppressed the Society, liquidatd all its institutions confiscated its property, arrested many of its more prominent workers and deported them to Siberia to forced labor and eventual extermination.

THE "ATEITININKĖS"

In 1911 Lithuanian students formed a youth organization which they called "Ateititis" (The Future). Their motto was "Renew all things in Christ." Before the advent of the Communist régime "Ateitis" had branches in every higher school in Lithuania and in the larger university centers in Russia. The chief purpose of the members was to develop educationally and spiritually. During World War I they particularly applied themselves to social welfare work.

At first the youth of both sexes belonged to the one organization. But from 1920 on, the girls began to form groups of their own and from 1921 even issued their own magazine "Naujoji Vaidilutė" (The New Vestal).

At a conference in 1927 the girls decided that while they